

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 /132 W

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R 112300Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4307

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 4603

E.O. 11652 - GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ES

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS DECIDE TO GO TO ELECTION IN COALITION

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. IN ITS NATIONAL CONVENTION DECEMBER 9, REPRESENTATIVES OF EL SALVADOR'S PRINCIPALE OPPOSTION PARTY, THE PDC, VOTED 83 TO 5 TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MARCH 1974 LEGISLATIVE AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, ALBEIT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PARTY LEADERSHIP COULD WITHDRAW THE PDC FROM THE CONTEST IF THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT OFFER ADEQUATE "ELECTORAL GUARANTEES." AS PREVIOUSLY PROJECTED (SEE A-161), THE ASSEMBLY ALSO DECIDED BY A VOTE OF 73 TO 10 WITH 5 ABSTENTIONS, TO JOIN WITH THE SMALL, LEFT-OF-CENTER MNR AND THE COMMUNIST-INFLUENCED UDN, IN THE UNO COALITION, THUS REPEATING THE STRATEGY USED IN THE BITTERLY-CONTESTED 1972 PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE/MUNCIPAL ELECTIONS. A PROPOSAL TO CONSIDER COALITION WITH THE RIGHTIST PARTIES, PPS AND FUDI, AS WELL, AS DISMISSED BY THE ASSEMBLY ON THE GROUNDS THAT THESE PARTIES WERE "TOO INCLINED" TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT.

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THE ASSEMBLY ALSO APPROVED A PARTY-SPONSORED PETITION ADDRESSED

TO FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE NAPOLEAN DUARTE, ASKING THAT HE RETURN FROM CARACAS.

2. ACCORDING TO ONE PDC LEADER, THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACED BY THE ASSEMBLY CONCERNED COALITION RATHER THAN ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION. SOME PDC LEADERS HELD THAT THE PDC "WAS MAKING A HABIT" OF COALITION, THAT IT WOULD BE HARD TO SHAKE IN THE 1976 LEGISLATIVE AND 1977 PRESIDENTIAL CONTESTS AND THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE LOSING THEIR INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER BY SO DOING. THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY, WHICH USUALLY DEVELOPS AND IMPLEMENTS PARTY STRATEGY, WAS DIVIDED DOWN THE MIDDLE ON THIS QUESTION. HOWEVER, THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE GENERALLY FAVORED COALITION, AS DID THE NATIONAL CONVENTION.

3. ONE ISSUE THAT WAS NOT TOUCHED AT THE CONVENTION BECAUSE OF ITS DIVISIVE EFFECT, WAS THE QUESTION OF THE RENOMINATION OF SAN SALVADOR MAYOR CARLOS HERRERA REBOLLO. LAST WEEK, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PDC OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED HERRERA THAT IT WAS THEIR OPINION THAT HE SHOULD NOT RUN AGAIN. HERRERA, WHO HAS EAGERLY SOUGHT RENOMINATION (SEE A-138), HAS ASKED FOR A HEARING BEFORE THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO EXPLAIN HIS CASE; THIS IS NOW SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 12. HERRERA HAS ALLEGEDLY AGREED TO ACCEPT THE FINAL VERDICT OF THE COMMITTEE ALTHOUGH SOME PDC LEADERS SUSPECT THAT HE MAY USE THE FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL NOMINATING ASSEMBLY, WHICH HE CONTROLS, TO TAKE OVER THE CAPITAL SLATE, WITH OR WITHOUT PARTY CONCURRENCE.

4. RUMORS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE THAT PARTY LEADER DUARTE MAY RETURN FROM CARACAS, AT LEAST FOR A BRIEF VISIT, AT CHRISTMAS OR AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR. THE LIMITED-CIRCULATION PAPER, LA CRONICA, CARRIES A RECENT INTERVIEW WITH DUARTE IN SANTIAGO, CHILE, IN WHICH HE REPORTEDLY STATES HE WILL RETURN TO EL SALVADOR IN JANUARY. QUESTIONED ABOUT HIS PERSONAL SAFETY SHOULD HE DO SO, DUARTE CONTENDS THAT THE GOES HAS OFFERED HIM ASSURANCES THAT HE WILL NOT BE PERSECUTED BUT, "DESPITE WHATEVER RISK, MY OBLIGATION IS TO GIVE TESTIMONY OF MY LOYALTY AND FIDELITY TO MY PEOPLE."

5. IN GENERAL, THE PDC CONVENTION WENT SMOOTHLY ENOUGH WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MORE DIFFICULT ISSUES EITHER AVOIDED OR PAPERED OVER. PARTY LEADERS COMPLAIN, HOWEVER, THAT THUS FAR THEY CAN SENSE LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FROM THE RANK AND FILE FOR THE FORTHCOMING CONTEST. THEY MAY BE COUNTING ON DUARTE'S RETURN TO SPARK THE ENTHUSIASM THEY WILL NEED IF THEY ARE TO SUCCESSFULLY CHALLENGE THE WELL-ORGANIZED MACHINERY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PCN. MOSKOWITZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, MEETINGS, MEETING VOTING RECORDS, PARTY ALLIANCE, LOCAL ELECTIONS, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: collinp0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANSAA04603
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731232/aaaaaxci.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: collinp0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Jan-2002 by smithrj>; APPROVED <08 MAR 2002 by collinp0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS DECIDE TO GO TO ELECTION IN COALITION USCINCSO FOR POLAD
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, ES, PDC, MNR, UDN, PPS, FUDI, (DUARTE, NAPOLEAN), (HERRERA REBOLLO, CARLOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005